



Wisconsin Department of  
Health and Family Services

## Preventing the Spread of Influenza at Home How You Can Help

Influenza (the “flu”) is a viral illness that is spread from person to person when people cough or sneeze near each other. The best way to prevent serious illness from the flu is to get immunized. Health officials encourage all persons over the age of 6 months to receive the “flu shot”. Immunization is strongly recommended for those at higher risk of complications from the flu. It is important to follow the guidelines listed below to help protect you and others from getting the flu. For more information, visit the website of the Department of Health and Family

Services at: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/influenza>.

### Immunization (Flu Shot)

**All persons in the following categories should be immunized:**

1. **Adults aged 50 and over.**
2. **Children 6 to 23 months old.**
3. **Adults and children with chronic medical conditions.\***
4. **Women who are pregnant during the flu season (October – March).**
5. **Children age 6 months to 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy.**
6. **All healthcare workers and employees of assisted living and other residences of persons at high risk.**
7. **Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months.**

\*Include those who have chronic disorders of the pulmonary or cardiovascular systems, including asthma (hypertension is not considered a high-risk condition), persons who have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes mellitus), renal dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies, or immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus [HIV]), and persons with any condition (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other neuromuscular disorders) that can compromise respiratory function, the handling of respiratory secretions, or increase the risk for aspiration.

### Coughing and Sneezing

**Practice good health habits when coughing or sneezing by:**

1. **Covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.**
2. **Discarding tissue in a waste container immediately after use.**
3. **Washing hands (as noted below) immediately after disposing of used tissue.**

**No one should share drinking cups, water bottles, eating utensils, or any other items placed in another person's mouth.**

### Washing Hands

**To help protect against illnesses like the “flu,” everyone should wash their hands:**

1. **After coughing or sneezing or whenever fingers touch the inside of the mouth or nose.**
2. **Before preparing food.**
3. **Before and after eating.**
4. **After hands touch another person who has a cough or cold.**
5. **Whenever hands are not clean.**

**Hands should be washed with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds, with rubbing action, then rinsed, and dried with a paper towel. A clean paper towel should be used to turn off water faucets.**

**The use of an alcohol gel (like Purell™) is a convenient and effective alternative to washing with soap and water. Use of an alcohol gel is encouraged for people who are in bed due to respiratory illnesses.**

### Keeping Sick Persons Away from Others

**People with influenza symptoms (fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache, muscle aches) should remain at home for 5 to 7 days after they first become ill. They should not go to work, school, day care, or any other public gatherings.**

**Visitors to households with ill persons should be limited.**

**Children under the age of 6 months should not come in contact with people who have symptoms.**

**During influenza season, newborns and young infants should be kept from crowded settings such as shopping malls, theaters, and other public gatherings.**

# Take Charge ... Stay Healthy!

**There are several simple steps that you can take to stop the spread of germs and help protect you and those around you from getting sick with influenza (the 'flu'), colds, or other illnesses:**

## **Avoid close contact**

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick as well.

## **Stay home when you are sick**

When you are sick, stay home from work and school, and avoid running errands. Not only will rest help you recover more quickly, but staying home will help prevent others from getting your illness.

## **Cover your mouth and nose**

When you cough or sneeze, be sure to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. This will help prevent the spread of germs. Be sure to throw the tissue in a wastebasket, and then clean your hands right away.

## **Clean your hands**

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Be sure to use warm water and enough soap to create a lather. Rinse your hands completely to allow the water to carry the soap, dirt and germs away. If soap and water are not available, using alcohol gels (such as Purell®) is a good alternative.

## **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth**

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

***Other good habits, such as not smoking, getting plenty of sleep, staying active, managing stress, drinking plenty of water, and eating healthy and nutritious food will help you stay healthy throughout the year!***



**Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services**  
Division of Public Health, PPH 42142 (10/04)

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/influenza>